



NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada

Regional Council News

December 8, 2020

Announcements and information of interest to the people of the Northern Spirit region.

If you have news to share or information about an upcoming event or learning opportunity, please write a short article, and send it to Kathy Jackson, Administrative Support: kjackson@united-church.ca. We are unable to include posters or other attachments, but links to further information may be included. Alternatively, our Community of Faith Events Calendar is open 24/7 for online events that are open to the public. Events can be posted directly to the Newsfeed: <https://northernspiritr.ca/add-your-community-event/>.

Advent and Christmas Greetings

The staff of the Regional Council extends to everyone its warm wishes for a blessed Advent and Christmas Season. We look forward to experiencing the hope, peace, joy and love that we anticipate during Advent, and the renewal that is possible with the birth of the Christ child.

The Regional Council Office will be closed for the Christmas Break from December 21 to January 3.

This newsletter is the final edition for 2020, and the next edition will be circulated on January 12, 2021.

Family News

New Phone Numbers: Executive Minister, Shannon McCarthy, and Executive Assistant, Jamie McKay, have new phone numbers and Extensions: Jamie, 1-800-268-3781, Ext. 2040; and Shannon, 1-800-268-3781, Ext. 2028.

COVID Updates ...

COVID Reflection from Ecumenical and Interfaith Leaders

Faith leaders from across Northern Alberta, including the Northern Spirit Regional Council, offer a statement and reflection on the impact of the COVID pandemic and its impacts. Please share widely in your circles. Please [download the PDF here](#).

Alberta Government is Supporting Safe Faith Community Gatherings

On November 9, the Alberta government announced that it is investing \$1 million to help faith-based and cultural organizations recover costs associated with COVID-19. From hosting online events, to facility upgrades and offering PPE, faith-based and cultural community groups have persevered to continue bringing hope, joy and connection to their communities. The new Faith-based and Cultural Facility Relaunch Grant will provide funding to offset costs related to following public health measures to ensure important religious and cultural gatherings can continue safely. For more information, please visit: [Faith-Based and Cultural Facility Relaunch Grant](#). Application intake deadlines are December 15, 2020, and March 1, 2021.

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Guidelines

The Federal, and all Provincial and Territorial Governments continue to provide updated guidance and direction regarding re-launching after the pandemic. Please be sure to continue to monitor the web sites for your jurisdiction: [Health Canada](#) [Alberta](#) [British Columbia](#) [Northwest Territories](#)

Re-Opening your Church Building: Discernment and Planning Resources

Considering the apparent “second wave” of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are all called to take responsibility for our safety and that of others around us. We know that complex discernment and planning is underway in many of our Communities of Faith. To assist, the Regional Council urges Communities of Faith to use these resources: a [Discernment Process](#), a [Planning Template](#), and a [Sample Seating Plan](#) (updated November 4) developed at Riverbend United Church, Edmonton. For other information from the Regional Council web site, [please click here](#). The Regional Council also urges Communities of Faith to be mindful of matters related to insurance. This page from the United Church web site has good information: [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about COVID-19 and Insurance.

Communities of Faith: please submit a copy of your Re-Opening Plan to the Regional Council Office: NorthernSpirit@united-church.ca.

Featured News ...

Alberta Chinook Winds Northern Spirit Student Bursary Fund Society

The Student Bursary Fund Society (formerly the Alberta and Northwest Conference Student Bursary Fund Society) is beginning the process to formally close the Society as an Alberta Society and an Incorporated Ministry of The United Church of Canada. The background, rationale and changes related to this, primarily administrative, move are outlined in this letter from Gord Waldie, Regional Council Chairperson, and Carolynne Bouey Shank, Alberta Chinook Winds Northern Spirit Student Bursary Fund Society Chairperson: [Student Bursary Fund Letter](#). Please be assured that the Bursary Fund will continue its support of students, and that all donations will continue to be used for the purpose to which they were directed.

No Room in the Inn

We have received information about to this year’s No Room in the Inn campaign, a project of the Edmonton & District Council of Churches (EDCC). This year the project will support two women’s shelters in downtown Edmonton, operated by Catholic Social Services. Details of the project can be found in the [Brochure](#) posted on the Northern Spirit web site.

The context of COVID-19 has introduced a number of challenges to traditional methods of producing publicity materials and conducting the campaign. This year, the EDCC intends to conduct an online campaign through the agency’s CanadaHelps site. We encourage donors to visit the collection site noted on the brochure: www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/m/55480.

TUXIS Parliament of Alberta

In December this year, the TUXIS Parliament of Alberta will hold its annual 5-day Winter Session in a new virtual format, giving youth from across the province a chance to partake in parliamentary debate, write resolutions, learn leadership skills and connect with peers despite the raging pandemic. The young people usually conduct their model parliament in the Legislative Assembly, but this year the session will take place on-line, and will involve no financial cost. Senator Paula Simons will preside over the opening of parliament as the Lieutenant Governor, and read the Speech from the Throne. Matthew Boonstra, the Premier chosen by his peers to lead the parliament this year, will then initiate the debate on the Speech from the Throne. The government usually survives this debate, although Leader of the Opposition, Yuvraj Singh, may have other ideas. There follows discussion and voting on resolutions proposed by the Cabinet members. According to Boonstra, “TUXIS creates a space for safe dialogue, where every viewpoint on the spectrum can be discussed. And, instead of polarizing people, these

conversations create a space to find understanding and expand our views.” Singh agrees, and stresses the skills that youth build as a part of the once in a lifetime experience. Alberta youth aged 15 to 20 years are eligible to take part in the session, which runs from December 26 to December 31. To register, please see: <https://form.jotform.com/203118513439249>. For more information about TUXIS Parliament of Alberta, please visit the web site: <https://www.tuxisyp.com>.

Prayer Request: Tigray Region, Ethiopia

The United Church of Canada joins Mission & Service partners of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in prayers and appeals for an end to [growing tensions and violence in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia](#). The United Church of Canada is contributing through the ACT Alliance Africa Regional response to the needs of people affected by the conflict. We pray for a peaceful resolution of this conflict so that all people in Ethiopia can live in peace with justice. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Anti-Racism Resource List from Trinity United Church, Edmonton

The good people of Trinity United put together [a list of anti-racism resources](#) they've found helpful in their anti-racism work. This list is a permanent work in progress, as new resources are found. Consider which ones would offer both space and a challenge to your community of faith.

Reminder to Submit Anti Racism Resource Receipts

Speaking of anti-racism resources: This is the last call on the Regional Council offer to pay for anti-racism resources for use as study or in your community of faith. Finance administrator Heather Dootoff asks you to send the receipts to her by email if possible by December 4: hdootoff@united-church.ca. What's this about? [Click here to learn more](#).

2020 Assessments and Charitable Returns: Final Reminder

Finance administrator Heather Dootoff has [some reminders about assessments](#) and charitable returns (because we all know how much fun we have with year end finances). It has been a tough year, and for those of you who have already paid your assessments in full: please know that we appreciate that you have done so in these very challenging circumstances. Your assessment makes possible a huge range of ministry in our church.

Opportunities to Serve the Regional Council

The Nominations Committee is looking for people from throughout the Northern Spirit region to fill vacancies on the Executive, and the Commissions, Committees and Task Groups. A list of the 2020-2012 leadership, including vacancies, has been posted to the Regional Council web site, and updates will be posted as they happen. Please check out the "[Get Involved](#)" page. If you, or someone you know, is interested in playing a role as our Regional Council continues to develop its mission and ministry, please contact the Regional Council Office: northernspirit@united-church.ca. There are many opportunities. Where do you feel called to serve?

In Other News ...

St. Stephen's College Launches a Re-Designed MTS Degree

St. Stephen's College has redesigned its Master of Theological Studies (MTS) degree and is currently accepting applications for 2021 admission. The re-designed MTS invites students to encounter diverse faith traditions and cultures in ways that enrich their person and deepen their social engagement. The

core courses are oriented toward cross-cultural and inter-religious experiences, personal and intellectual formation, and development in community leadership. Dedicated specializations in Faith and Culture or Spiritual Care allow students to deepen their spiritual understanding and/or focus on a new vocational field. For more information, see our website: www.ualberta.ca/st-stephens.

'Tis the Season: Advent and Christmas Events and Resources ...

Goodwill To ALL: A Conversation on Anti-Racism in the Church

Thursdays, December 10, 17, at 7:30 PM (MST), and Sunday, December 20, at 2:00 PM (MST). All are welcome to this Advent series on full inclusion, with a focus on anti-racism! This week, December 10, one of the speakers will be the Rev. Dr. Paul Douglas Walfall, Ministry Personnel at Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/141591450631129/>. Register here for free, and see the overall program: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYpfu2rqTgjH9CoU9l4iOy9Aybd078eY6qj>

Indigenous Ministries Videos for Advent

Murray Pruden, United Church Executive Minister for Indigenous Ministries and Justice, offers us an invitation to brief weekly reflections as we journey together for Advent. Find them on the [Indigenous Ministries' Facebook page](#). [Here's the Advent 1 reflection](#).

Advent's Lament: A Blue Christmas Worship Gathering

December 9, 5:30 pm (MST). As we mark almost a full year of changed life because of Covid-19, we would like to offer a denominational-wide service of Lament for Advent, with Moderator, Richard Bott. [Click here for full details](#).

Deep Winter Song: Celebrating the Mystery of the Winter Solstice

December 20, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. (MST), virtually through Eventbrite. This is an "acoustic" musical presentation exploring and celebrating the Mystery of the Winter Solstice, Christmas, and this wondrous dark season of winter. The night will include traditional and modern songs of winter, inspiring stories and poetry, angelic voices, delightful and mystical moods, beautiful projections, a time of Sacred Sound Journey, and a Solstice Fire Ritual. This year, Deep Winter Song will be held virtually through Eventbrite, so that one can attend from anywhere in the world! Here are the event links. Eventbrite, <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/deep-winter-song-2020-tickets-129178342901>; and Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2841294772857641>

Gifts with Vision Catalogue: Ideas for your Christmas Giving

The United Church's Gifts with Vision offers us alternative gifts that empower communities, and which don't add more "things" to a world awash with them. Consider this for Christmas or birthday gifts this year. [Have a look at the many inspiring options](#).

Advent Unwrapped Resources

Get ready for Christ(mas)! Advent - a holy, four-week countdown to Jesus' birthday - began on Sunday, November 29. Get ready to make room for Christ and the radical, countercultural messages that Christ brings. Throughout the season, videos, prayers, family resources, and reflections on this page will introduce and explore the Christmas story. For more worship resources visit the United Church web site: [Advent and Christmas worship pages](#). Follow the [Advent Unwrapped](#) Facebook page for regular updates on all kinds of resources.

Upcoming Events and Learning Opportunities ...

Training for United Church Conflict Resolution Facilitators

The United Church of Canada is seeking applicants to serve as Conflict Resolution Facilitators under its Dispute Resolution Policy: https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/handbook_dispute-resolution.pdf. Successful applicants will have a basic familiarity with the theology, polity and procedures of The United Church of Canada; strong pastoral skills; the ability to travel anywhere in Canada (post-pandemic); the ability to facilitate conflict resolution processes remotely via Zoom or similar technology; completed a basic course in alternative dispute resolution approved by the General Council office; and practical experience in mediating/facilitating alternative dispute resolution processes. Additional requirements and information will soon be posted under Jobs and Opportunities on the United Church web site: <https://www.united-church.ca/opportunities>. Responses must be received via email to cgunn@united-church.ca by January 31, 2021.

Invite a Global Speaker to your Worship or Community of Faith

[People in Partnership](#) invites you to learn more about the work and mission of partners around the world by inviting an individual to come and share their stories with United Church of Canada communities of faith. Find out more about these pilgrims, companions, co-workers and learners [here](#). Although speakers are grouped by region, many are available to be present and share remotely with your community of faith online. Please contact pip@united-church.ca to invite a speaker.

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